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The Global Trade Agenda in 2004

By [The Globalist](#) | Wednesday, December 31, 2003

The year 2003 was crucial for trade. At the September WTO meeting in Cancun, developing countries voiced their anger about unfair trade practices. Transatlantic relations witnessed a row over U.S. steel tariffs. In Asia, ASEAN moved closer to an eventual economic union. Then, there is the Chinese manufacturing juggernaut. We present 2003's most poignant quotes on the subject.

What is trade all about?

"Trade must be a tool not only to create wealth, but also to distribute it in a more equitable way."

(Brazil's Foreign Minister Celso Amorim)

"Why can't the Americans stick to making what we can't? For little things like bras, nobody can compete with China." (Yang Rong, manager of Jinhua Asset Underwear Co.)

Which country is making protectionist noises?

"You can see the protectionist sentiment growing rapidly — but you haven't seen anything yet."

(Frank Vargo, lobbyist for the U.S. National Association of Manufacturers)

How does the Bush Administration view the issue?

"American manufacturers can compete against any country's white collars and blue collars — but we will not submit to competing against another country's choke collars."

(Donald Evans, U.S. Commerce Secretary)

How crucial is open trade for developing countries?

"Africans will live — or die — depending on whether the world's wealthiest economies lower import barriers and scale back on agricultural subsidies and overproduction, which depress world prices."

(Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda)

Do export subsidies really hinder production in developing countries?

"What's the use of our farmers even producing when you can buy something from the United States cheaper at the local market?"

(Congo's President Joseph Kabila)

Have trade activists changed their tune over the years?

"Listen hard to Third World activists these days. It is not anti-globalization rhetoric you hear — but anti-trade-barrier rhetoric."

(Anne Applebaum, Washington Post columnist)

What does the WTO have to offer smaller countries?

"The WTO has its flaws — but it is a forum where the weak can seek redress against the strong when the rules are broken."

(Larry Elliott, economics editor at The Guardian)

"What's the use of our farmers even producing when you can buy something from the United States cheaper at the local market?" (Congo's President Joseph Kabila)

Which kind of barriers can be applied?

"The Europeans use health standards to protect their agricultural markets. Now it appears the United States is moving in the same direction, only using security issues as a protectionist tool."

(Senior Southeast Asian government official)

How do some people look at transatlantic trade disputes?

"There is nervousness about the saber-rattling by the EU on trade issues. It is like a neighbor who is constantly calling the cops and complaining."

(John Douglass, president of the Aerospace Industries Association)

Does everyone welcome bilateral trade agreements?

"The danger is that, by small increments, we will carve the world into blocs. That kind of world will not be advantageous to smaller and weaker countries."

(Senior Singaporean official)

"It's sort of Leninist — because the United States is picking off countries one by one." (Jagdish Bhagwati, economics professor at Columbia University)

How serious is the United States about its push for such agreements?

"The United States will not wait: We will move towards free trade with can-do countries."

(U.S. Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick)

What is peculiar about the U.S. trade strategy?

"It's sort of Leninist — because they're picking off countries one by one."

(Jagdish Bhagwati, economics professor at Columbia University)

How has Mexico been affected by Chinese competition?

"Right now, it is like competing in a race — but they are running on land and you are swimming in the water."

(Mario Montes de Oca, owner of Union Clothing)

Why is the decline of Latin American trade particularly worrisome?

"From the 15th to the 19th century, Latin America's external trade and investment had greater significance than in the 20th century."

(James Petras, author)

Could the United States help?

"Why can't the Americans stick to making what we can't? For little things like bras, nobody can compete with China."

(Yang Rong, manager of Jinhua Asset Underwear Co.)

Is that view shared by some in the United States?

"The "cotton-picking truth", as they say in rural Texas, is that the United States has no business growing 16 million bales of cotton a year."

(New York Times editorial)

But what about protecting jobs?

"Trade does not destroy jobs — but shifts them elsewhere."

(Brad DeLong, economics professor at the University of California at Berkeley)

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